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EDITOR . R PALME DUTT

## Coal and Steel

William Gallacher, M.P.

## United Nations in Paris

Quæstor

## On the Strike Front in France

Dominique Desanti

**DECEMBER, 1948**

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# ON NOT BEING BEHOLDEN

PERHAPS one of the most painful private feelings in life is to know yourself under an obligation that you can't repay; so highly does the ordinary man or woman prize independence. That very pride in "not being beholden" is part of human beings' revolt against a class society in which the vast majority must be robbed of everything on which real independence can be built. What a deep contrast in human terms are the principles of a Socialist society, and between comrades in the international working class movement, who can freely share in solidarity with their brothers.

That is why we can't resist giving you the opportunity of feeling, as we did, a glow of pride and pleasure in reading these three letters; one from a Fascist prison (there are still Fascist states in Europe), one from an office desk in Germany, and one from a sick bed in the United States.

> Since last January I have received copies of your very good magazine. All these copies have been offered us gratuitously from a reader in England. But I and my fellows are observing that "Labour Monthly" goes on in pecuniary great difficulty. In such conditions it is our wish not to be burdening your magazine. For that reason we have gathered some money to send you for a subscription. With this letter is £1 we are sending for an eighteen months' subscription. Please receive also the very strong thanks of my fellows and me. Sincerely and gratefully,
>
> **A Political Prisoner** (name withheld)

> I have long wanted to thank you cordially for arranging that I get the magazine, which Mrs. B., of Bristol, has sent me regularly. For us German authors, it is especially valuable to hear of the efforts of our friends in foreign countries. Once more, many thanks and companionable regards.
>
> **H.W.K. (Dresden)**

> I am very ill at present and can do little, but here is a cheque for $20. Will you take out as many subscriptions as it will buy for people in Germany, or elsewhere?
>
> **E.M. (Chicago)**

IF IT'S GOODWILL YOU'RE AFTER . . .

Readers are already beginning to renew the subscriptions which they were given by friends under our Gift Token Scheme last year. There are not so many gifts that bring to mind the giver month after month, till Christmas comes round again. So this is a present that can scarcely be bettered if it's

(*Continued on page iii of cover*)

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# COAL AND STEEL

## By WILLIAM GALLACHER, M.P.

NATIONALISATION of the means of production, distribution and exchange has been discarded by the Labour leaders. Something entirely different from all that was envisaged by the pioneers has to take its place—what Mr. Morrison has euphemistically referred to as mixed economy. Certain important heavy industries are to be nationalised while the general body of industries remain in private hands; the main purpose of the nationalisation of the particular industries being to supply the essential basic materials in the greatest possible quantity and at the lowest possible rate for the privately-owned sector of industry. This is nationalisation for the capitalists and not in any way for the workers.

Of course, with the mines there was a difficulty. The campaign for nationalisation of the mines had been carried on for years with the Miners' Federation and the trade union leaders in the forefront of the campaign. Thus the whole idea associated with this proposed change was that it would provide an entirely different and very much better standard of life and conditions of work for the miners. So when the mines were taken over certain long-awaited concessions had to be granted. But the vital decisive question, that of control, was preserved in such a way as would, once the first enthusiasm was over, allow of the mining industry being fitted into Morrison's so-called mixed economy, in other words, used as a means of keeping the capitalist system of society on its feet, even though it is weak at the knees and needs propping up with dollar crutches.

But the National Coal Board cannot supply cheap coal to the other industries. It is too heavily weighted with compensation payments to the former owners. It has to sell dear at home, it has to sell dear for export. Now the Americans are demanding a cut in our coal export prices. They want to use British coal against Polish coal in the countries of Western Europe. The Poles are carrying out the reconstruction of their country on the basis of socialist economy. They refuse to sell their country for "Marshall Dollars". So America is anxious to direct economic war against them. The British miner is to be used against the Polish miner. A cut in export prices for this purpose would mean a serious loss for the Coal Board. It would make the possibility of cheap coal for private industry in Britain even more remote. Yet it is just this the Government and the Coal Board are most desperately anxious to achieve. Without cheap coal British capitalism cannot hope to keep up the export drive, with a buyers' market replacing a sellers' market.

So the Minister of Fuel has his instructions from the Government. The Executive of the Labour Party and the General Council of the

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*(The Notes of the Month by R.P.D. will be resumed in the New Year)*



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Trades Union Congress, including the miners' officials on these bodies, faithfully fall into line. The Minister and the National Coal Board have announced a policy which the press presents as "get tough with the miners". But getting tough with the miners is dangerous; they may defend themselves as one man! The Labour Party Executive and the General Council go into action. A full-blast campaign is opened against the Communists. What effect could this campaign have—if successful—but to disrupt and paralyse the unions, precisely at that moment when they need the full strength of unity to resist a "get tough" policy which worsens their conditions?

So we get an unprincipled attack on Arthur Horner on the grounds that he was opposing the policy of the National Union of Mineworkers by declaring in their name solidarity with the striking miners of France. Neither Lawther nor Watson would dare for a moment to suggest that the living standards imposed on the French miners would be tolerated for a moment by the British miners. If such conditions were imposed here there would not be a British miner working in the British coalfields. But that means nothing to these exponents of the new gospel of mixed economy. They are big men now. Why should they waste their time with ordinary workers in France, even though they are miners, when they have Marshall for a pal? And not only "Comrade" Marshall, but Vandenberg, du Pont de Nemours, Morgan, Rockefeller, Hoffman, Harriman, Forrestal, and a whole lot more of them. All millionaires or multi-millionaires. Yes, sir, Mr. Lawther and Mr. Watson are going up in the world. Why don't they take their new pals up for a tour of Durham coalfields? Here you are, boys, here are your friends. These are the lads who are keeping you going. If it were not for these big dollar boys of America, there would be mass unemployment and starvation all over Britain. But, says one of the Durham miners, "you told us it was the Labour Government that was saving us from such a fate. Now you say it is the Tories—of America. Are you trying to kid us, or what?" To which Lawther and Watson would in all probability reply, "Get out, you damned red, you are as bad as Horner". But Mr. Lawther and Mr. Watson won't succeed in palming off on the miners the American millionaires as their friends. True, they have the full support of the whole capitalist press in the country, the radio and the most reactionary elements of all the religious institutions. There is only one thing wanted. They can't give the miners what the miners desire, and the "get tough policy" will never be accepted no matter how many blandishments they may try. Here from the *Daily Worker* as I write is a statement issued on Wednesday, 17th November:

> The Miners' Executive decided in London yesterday, in view of the objections to the setting up of Joint Attendance Committees to deal with absenteeism, to ask all branches to report on local measures at present in operation.
>
> They also decided to ask the Coal Board that the Joint Committee on Production should review the position.

But the Coal Board has the task of bringing down the price of coal.



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This could be done by stopping payment of compensation to the former coal owners. This the Government will not tackle, for it would mean a real attack on capitalism and would require the whole force of the working-class movement, including the Communists, to carry it through. It would also mean a break with Marshall and the American millionaires. So while we have the present leadership in the Labour movement that can be ruled out. The only other way is to cut the price at the expense of the miner. Harder work and greater output without corresponding increase in living standards. This is what the General Council and the majority of the Miners' Executive hope to achieve. This is what "Comrade" Marshall wants, and what the Federation of British Industries wants. It's a great game. It has been played on the workers often enough, but never before have the trade union leaders so openly and deliberately set themselves to doing the dirty work of the capitalist class.

On the 31st Anniversary of the Russian Revolution Molotov spoke of the great advance in production in the Soviet Union. He followed this by showing that the wages of the workers, the real wages as expressed in purchasing power, had doubled since last year. That's as it should be. That makes sense. Increased production and an increased standard of living. But here it's the opposite. Increased productivity and a declining standard of living. Does that make sense? It certainly does not. And you don't have to take my word for it. Maurice Webb, Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, raised this very matter at a Party meeting, and submitted a series of budgets drawn from his constituency to show the decline in purchasing power, and the real problem that was facing the housewife.

Increased production. We're getting it, but where is the surplus going? Not to the workers. No! Part of it is going to pile up armaments for America's war against the Soviet Union—against Socialism in Europe. What a despicable rôle for a Labour Government. To spend the nation's resources in preparation for a war from which only the multi-millionaires of America can hope to gain an advantage. For a war such as is contemplated can mean nothing other than complete disaster for this country. Yet that is where part of the increased production is going, to forward America's war plans—and the rest? Believe it or not, brother, it's going into the pockets of these same American multi-millionaires, who are so anxious, according to Lawther and Watson, to help us out of our difficulties. How did they come to believe such hokum?

But the bulk of the increased production, from industry as a whole, goes to export in order to cover the adverse balance created by the fact that we are dependent on America for a disproportionate amount of her goods, while America does not take anything like a similar quantity of our goods. But the goods we get from America are all at inflated prices. Truman removed controls towards the end of 1946 and prices in America went soaring. We have to put huge profits



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into the pockets of the American capitalists. That is why we have the almost unbelievable contradiction of increased productivity with a declining standard of living. That's why we have the Marshall Plan. A plan to keep us tied to America and to toil and sweat to feed the American war machine and swell American profits. That is why there is a demand for a "get tough policy" with the miners, that is why there is such a ferocious slander campaign against the Communist Party.

But the workers will never be taken in by such a fraudulent policy. The strike of the Ayrshire miners and the growing unrest throughout the coalfields should be a warning to those who think they can cash in on American Dollars.

So much for coal. What of steel? If ever there was a sham fight it was during the discussion on the Steel Bill. Forty years ago one of the most popular pamphlets at socialist meetings was "Liberal and Tory Hypocrisy". It is time a new chapter was added to it. Consider. During the war the Coalition Government, in the case of several firms where production was not up to standard, took over the shares of the companies and appointed directors to take charge of the business. The firm of Shorts was a case in point. But nobody ever dreamed of suggesting that such a procedure had anything to do with nationalisation. Yet that is all that is happening with steel. The shareholders get bonds in place of their shares. One piece of paper in exchange for another. All the separate boards of directors remain. The structure of the industry is unaltered. The relations between directors and workers, between the industry and the Trade Unions remain as they were. No change of any kind. Not once in any speech by Government spokesmen was there even a suggestion that the workers in the industry would benefit in any way from the change, or that the measure was prompted by concern for the working class. Having taken over the shares, the Government now becomes responsible for spending somewhere about £200 million to bring the industry up to a measurable standard of efficiency. Once that has been done, the bonds can be retrieved and the shares handed back again. In fact, Mr. Morrison, a master of banalities and trivialities, after the most pretentious and nonsensical claims for the Bill, informed Eden who (on a point arising out of something said by Cripps) demanded an answer to the question, would the Conservatives have the right to repeal the Bill, that this course would be quite in order. I quote *Hansard*, Wednesday, 17th November, column 483:

> My answer is that, clearly, it would be constitutionally perfectly legitimate for that to be done.

He should have added "We have made it perfectly simple for you to do so. We give them bonds and take their shares, you give them shares and take their bonds". The bonds will be valued at £1 10s for every £1 preference share, £2 6s 8d on the average for every £1 of ordinary stock. So says Sir Stafford Cripps to the Tories in the House of Commons, or as he further put it, £243 million in respect of



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£134,500,000 of paid-up capital. And this is the bloke who tells the workers, " Don't think of material things, think of spiritual things".

Strauss, Minister of Supply, was anxious to get the Tories to understand that the idea of the move was to secure our Defence programme, to strengthen the gearing up of the American war machine. Strauss is reputed to be a very wealthy man, in his own right. In his reckoning the workers do not appear prominently in the picture, except in so far as they could be induced to work even harder than in the past several years.

What was generally recognised to be the most knowledgeable, clearest and effective speech was made by Sir Andrew Duncan, the spokesman of the Steel Federation. In that speech he made it evident beyond any doubt that there were no serious differences between the steel barons and the Government. They understand what is happening and how easy it will be to bring about readjustments. The whole miserable business is a policy designed to keep decrepit capitalism going at the expense of the people who must continue on short rations, without the slightest hope of betterment. Cripps, in the rôle of the Anti-Communist Holy Inquisitor, held up the fearsome " bogy". " Social Democracy is the true barrier against Communism", he declared. The enemy for him, as for Deakin, Lawther and Watson, is no longer capitalism or the capitalist class. The enemy is Gallacher, Pollitt, and those with whom they are associated—the politically active workers.

Mr. Mackay, a wealthy Labour gent, who exudes importance, who with Churchill carries the burden of responsibility not only for Britain, but for Western Europe also, put the matter very bluntly and very crudely. " The conflict in Europe," he said, " is not between capitalism and anything else, because capitalism is dead and finished". (How many pound shares have you got in the corpse, Mr. Mackay?) " That is an 18th century conception. The conflict is between Social Democracy and Communism." Loud cheers from the American multi-millionaires, who are "dead and finished".

But there, in the cheap and trashy twaddle of this wealthy and conceited person, you get the whole sorry bag of tricks. Deceive the workers and slander the Communists. Gear up the war machine and crawl in meek subservience before the corrupt and corrupting Dollar God of America. Such a policy can solve no problems for the people of this country. It can only bring upon us ruin and disaster. Yet it is for such a policy that Labour and Trade Union leaders try to shackle the working class. But the shackle will not hold. The workers know that capitalism is not dead, they know that the profit-mongers are as rapacious as they ever were. Nor will the Communists be deterred by lies and slanders. Strengthened and supported by the politically active workers, the Communist Party will carry high and proud the banner of working-class emancipation, the banner of peace and progress—the banner which the agents of Dollar Imperialism are trying to bury in the quagmire of "mixed economy".



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# THE UNITED NATIONS IN PARIS

By QUÆSTOR

FOR some time before the third General Assembly of the United Nations opened in Paris on September 21, circumstantial rumours of "war against Russia next Spring" were going the rounds of the clubs, fashionable restaurants and haunts of journalists in London, Paris and Washington. There was plenty of solid material for the rumour-bearers to work at. On March 17 the five Western States had signed a treaty at Brussels pledging mutual assistance against some unnamed aggressor in Europe (unlike the bilateral treaties signed in Eastern Europe, which are confined to resisting revived aggression by Germany or some Power allied to her). On June 1, the same five States, together with the U.S.A., had concluded an agreement in London for the economic revival of Germany, and in particular of the great centre of her heavy industry in the Ruhr. (Dean Acheson, the American Under-Secretary of State, had already on May 8, 1947, proclaimed U.S. policy to be the restoration of Germany as a "great workshop of Europe"). Within the next month Britain, the U.S.A. and France, by issuing a separate currency in Western Germany (June 18) and introducing it, a few days later, into Western Berlin—separated at that time by no trade or transport barriers from the Soviet zone all round the city—had deliberately, and of malice aforethought, attempted to disorganise the entire economy of that zone: as open an act of aggression as any in history. Amid many comings and goings of British, French and American generals, a Military Staffs Committee of the Brussels Powers had been set up: and the British Deputy Chief of the Air Staff had proclaimed the U.S.S.R. to be "our potential enemy", while the U.S. Defence Secretary, speaking in the Senate in support of a supplementary $3,000,000,000 army estimate, openly spoke of war against Russia. The American lickspittles ruling Italy had hurried to show their eagerness to be Forrestal's jackals, as once their predecessors had been Hitler's, by demonstratively conferring the highest military decorations for feats of arms in the Italian war of aggression against the U.S.S.R.—the very war for which Italy was nominally being punished by the Peace Treaty! Every leading capitalist newspaper in the world was fanning the flames of hatred of the U.S.S.R. and of war hysteria.

It was pretty clear that for the British and American Governments and their satellites the Paris Assembly would be little more than a new sounding board of propaganda for a war of revenge on the U.S.S.R.—revenge for having survived the frightful disasters of Hitler's war, revenge for having emerged morally stronger from the ordeal, revenge for recovering so quickly, revenge for serving as the shield and champion of a group of States which fell away from the imperialist world in 1944-5 as Russia herself had done in 1917.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was coming to Paris with a



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long record of strenuous efforts to find a reasonable and peaceable compromise solution on every outstanding question in dispute. In May, 1948, it had welcomed the approach made to Molotov by Bedell-Smith, U.S. Ambassador in Moscow (May 4), for "exhaustive discussion and settlement of our differences". On June 24 it subscribed to the Warsaw declaration of eight Foreign Ministers of Eastern Europe, issued as an answer to the London agreement of June 1. This declaration suggested that Britain, the U.S.S.R., France and the U.S.A. should effect the final demilitarisation of Germany, establish four-Power control over the Ruhr to develop only peacetime production there, establish a provisional democratic government for all Germany, lay down Germany's reparation obligations to countries she had injured by aggression, sign a peace treaty with her and withdraw their occupation troops 12 months thereafter. On August 30 the Soviet Government reached agreement with the three Western Powers about simultaneous ending of transport restrictions around Berlin, and acceptance of Soviet zone marks as the sole currency in the city, to be circulated there under four-Power auspices. On September 18 the Soviet Government informed the U.S.A. that, although the latter had not accepted the Soviet proposal of October, 1947, for simultaneous withdrawal of their respective forces from North and South Korea, the Soviet Army would nevertheless begin withdrawal at once, to be completed by the end of 1948. On the subject of the atomic energy discussions which had been going on for nearly three years, and on which the General Assembly (December 14, 1946) had adopted a resolution stressing (in that order) " the urgent objective of prohibiting and eliminating from national armaments atomic and all other major weapons adaptable now and in the future to mass destruction " and " the early establishment of international control of atomic energy " to ensure its peaceful use, the Soviet Government had also a record of compromise effort to show. It believed itself that the "urgent objective" was to prohibit the atom bomb and destroy existing stocks: it had tabled a draft convention to this effect on June 19, 1946; but it had also proposed a draft convention for a detailed system of international control on June 11, 1947: and an officially authorised Tass statement (May 22, 1948) had made clear that " the Soviet Union stands for the prohibition of atomic weapons *and along with it* the establishment of effective international control over the production of atomic energy in all countries".

Thus it was pretty clear that for the Soviet Government the Paris Assembly would serve as a sounding board for new proposals aimed at a peaceful, compromise solution of international differences—proposals based on the principle of peaceful co-operation of the economic systems, Socialist and capitalist, enunciated long ago by Lenin and stressed by Stalin in his talk with Harold Stassen (April 9, 1947): proposals which experience had shown (as at the time of the Molotov-Bedell Smith talks last May) command widespread support among the working millions of all countries.



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In fact the proceedings at Paris have shown the two groups conforming to expectations. At the time of writing, the U.N. Assembly still has three weeks to go, but a summing up of its main proceedings so far (November 15) can usefully be made.

The Anglo-American bloc gave public notice of the spirit in which it was approaching the Assembly, at the very start, by procuring the election of its own nominees to every one of the six chairmanships of the Assembly's main committees, and eliminating all representatives of Eastern Europe, contrary to the principle of regional allocation recognised by U.N.O. in the past. This barefaced act of aggressive hostility aroused so much comment in the press, supporting the protests of the Soviet and other delegations, that some grudging amends were made in the election of the seven Vice-Presidents, Poland and the U.S.S.R. being included. But the incident was symptomatic of the now open and snarling vicious enmity of the British and American representatives to the U.S.S.R. It is characteristic at the same time of their cowardly fear of their own people that the British press throughout the subsequent proceedings has avoided publishing any texts of the dignified and reasoned Soviet, Polish, Czechoslovak and other Socialist speeches. While printing with satisfaction the insults and abuse of the U.S.S.R bandied about by Mayhew, Hector McNeil, Hartley Shawcross, Senator Austin and other Anglo-American spokesmen, the newspapers have confined themselves in the main to writing of Soviet "vituperation" and "attacks"—thereby leaving their readers to infer that the tone of Soviet speeches was like the Billingsgate employed by the mouthpieces of Western civilisation. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth; but there's method in their madness, comprehensible enough when you look at what the Soviet Government proposed at the Assembly, and what was the fate of its proposals.

On September 25 Vyshinsky introduced the Soviet resolution on reduction of armaments—the five Great Powers, possessors of most armed forces and armaments in the world, to reduce their land, sea and air forces by one-third within one year, as a first step: prohibition of atomic weapons as manifestly intended for aggression, not defence: and establishment under the Security Council of an international body to supervise the carrying out of these measures. In the Conventional Armaments Commission the Soviet delegation introduced detailed proposals for studying what particular adjustments must be made for the special circumstances of each country: and it proposed that all five Powers should notify the central body of the size of their forces. (Vyshinsky's speech of October 12). In the course of the subsequent six weeks' debate, a wonderful variety of subterfuges and pretexts were used by the spokesmen of the Anglo-American bloc to justify rejection of these proposals, which had aroused enthusiasm among the common people of all countries. But none of the pretexts was original: they had all been used during the disarmament discussions, of inglorious memory, held at Geneva from 1927 to 1934: and they were all contemptible in their transparent fear of taking the U.S.S.R. at its word,



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and thus crippling their own plans for aggressive war on Socialist States.

On October 2 the Soviet Delegation brought forward its proposals to break the deadlock in atomic energy discussions. Only the previous day, McNeil had been holding forth about how Britain was "leaning over backwards" to meet the Soviet demand for a convention prohibiting atomic bombs: and how world confidence had been "shocked and dissipated" because, if that demand were met, the Russians would not guarantee that the other convention—for international control—would be concluded. Spaak, the Belgian Prime Minister and obedient stooge of Wall Street, had seconded him: what was necessary was simultaneous conventions, he declared. Now Vyshinsky brought forward that very proposal. The two should enter into force simultaneously, he proposed: the U.S.A. would thus not be giving up its advantage, in the shape of atom bomb stocks, without the assurance that an international machinery of inspection, under the Security Council but autonomous and using majority decisions where inspection was concerned, could have access for checking purposes at its discretion, to the atomic plants of all countries, including the U.S.S.R. Did this satisfy the unctuous advocate of "leaning over backwards"? Not on your life. He retreated to previously prepared positions. Would the U.S.S.R. agree that a "fully effective international control system" should be applied *before* the prohibition of atom bombs was put into effect, he now demanded (October 6). In other words, would the U.S.A. have full access to all potential targets in the U.S.S.R. while still in possession of the bomb stocks which its leading politicians, military men and journalists have for months been anxiously announcing their desire to drop on Soviet cities? And would the U.S.S.R. agree to accept the American definition of "international control", asked Senator Austin: i.e. would it agree that the control organisation should *own* all thorium and uranium deposits and all works using them, thus becoming an international trust controlled by a capitalist majority?

It was soon quite obvious that the talk about "leaning over backwards" was only a blind, and that the Anglo-American bloc had no intention whatever of concluding an honest compromise agreement. And the announcement, on October 4, of the formation of a High Command for the forces of Western Union, headed by Montgomery, gave point to the exposure.

On October 4, overriding Soviet objections on the ground that German matters were not the concern of U.N.O. by the terms of its Charter, the Security Council began discussions on the situation in Berlin. Although the British, American and French Governments, who insisted on raising the matter, had scored this success and developed their case freely, it soon became obvious that the crux of the issue was not the "violence" or "illegality" of Soviet action, but the cold blooded manner in which the Western Powers had thrown a spanner into the works of German economy in the Soviet-occupied



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zone. More and more loudly voices of the smaller States began to plead for a compromise; the Soviet Delegation repeated that it was ready for a fresh start, on the basis of the agreed decisions of August 20: and Dr. Bramuglia, the Argentine president of the Security Council, began his efforts at mediation. The exact course of the subsequent proceedings is not yet fully known. What we do know is that, on October 24, agreement was reached between Vyshinsky and Bramuglia, acting on behalf of the three Western Powers, on simultaneous removal of restrictions and negotiations for introduction of the Soviet mark, as the sole currency in Berlin: both processes to begin immediately and to be completed by November 20: neither to be valid without the other: and negotiations on all outstanding questions concerning Germany to begin between the Four Powers by November 30. We also know that, within 24 hours, the three Western Powers repudiated this agreement—and the American press has carried an eloquent account of how this was done, from the pen of that well-informed American correspondent, Frederick Kuh. We know, finally, that the resolution which the Anglo-American bloc then sponsored, and tried to force through the Security Council (where it was defeated by the adverse vote of the U.S.S.R.) was copied word for word from the draft agreement—except that the provision about November 20 applied only to currency talks, while the restrictions were to be removed immediately. Thus the Western Powers were seriously suggesting that they were to have a full month during which to flood the Soviet zone with their own currency, and to import or export what goods they pleased—at the end of which period they *might* agree to introduction of the Soviet currency into a ruined and disorganised territory.

It was only too clear that, while the U.S.S.R. had proposed a genuine compromise, based on a rational approach to the peculiar situation of Berlin in the heart of the Soviet zone, the aggressive Governments of Britain and America "want, not agreement and co-operation, but talk about agreement and co-operation in order to disrupt agreement, to throw the blame on the U.S.S.R., and by so doing prove the impossibility of co-operation with the U.S.S.R." (Stalin's statement to *Pravda*, October 28, 1948). As though to add point to this exposure, the five signatories of the Brussels Treaty announced, on October 26, that they had reached agreement on a "North Atlantic Defensive Pact", i.e. on a military alliance with the U.S.A.

At the end of October the report of the Balkans Commission came before the Political Committee of the Assembly—once more against the protest of the Soviet delegation, which had fought the appointment of a body so manifestly intended to justify a policy of Anglo-American intervention in Greece. The report proved to be a grotesque collection of "admissions" by prisoners in peril of their lives if they did not testify what the Greek Royalists wanted, of ambiguous inferences from such evidence as "footprints leading to the frontier", "shots proceeding from the direction of the border", etc.,



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and of entirely unproven conclusions. Contrary to the practice adopted, e.g. in the case of Palestine, the delegates of Bulgaria and Albania were only invited to make preliminary statements and answer questions, not to take part in the discussion. Things were so bad that the Australian representative on the Commission was moved to disown much of the "evidence" altogether and the Australian representative at the Political Committee said (October 30) plainly that the Commission had gone far beyond its mandate and its competence, and that it ought to devote itself to one main task for which it was fitted—namely, conciliation.

The Soviet delegation now made a series of proposals which would have created the conditions for real conciliation. Greece should re-establish diplomatic relations with Bulgaria and Albania. These two countries, with Yugoslavia, should conclude frontier and refugee agreements with Greece. The Greek Government should eliminate discrimination against citizens of Macedonian or Albanian nationality. All foreign troops and military missions should be withdrawn. The activities of the Balkans Committee of U.N.O. should be terminated, and the countries named should themselves report to U.N.O. in six months. But these proposals, too, were defeated, apart from the first two—McNeil and Foster Dulles (U.S.A.) arguing that their troops were in Greece "at the request of the elected Government" (November 10). The fact that their troops, already installed in Greece, had stood by in 1946 while the police and army of the Royalist Government waged a war of terror and murder against the Communist, Socialist and Liberal parties, in preparation for "elections", was of no importance to them.

This was hardly surprising, since Mr. McNeil had already admitted in the public debate (October 26) that "possibly the British Government might have strategic interests in Greece". Thus once again Soviet compromise proposals, aimed at lessening international tension, were rejected because they interfered with the war policies of the Anglo-American bloc.

There is hardly space for more than a mention of a number of other important questions dealt with or entered upon during the first seven weeks of the Assembly. The report of the United Nations acting mediator in Palestine brought out into the open familiar tactics of the British Foreign Office—to press with fury and venom for sanctions against the forces of Israel (now that they had victoriously driven back the Lebanese in the north and the Egyptians in the south), after having successfully blocked any United Nations action either to avert a conflict between Jews and Arabs within Palestine, last spring, or to prevent invasion of Palestine by the Arab States in the summer. On November 2 the Polish Foreign Minister Modzelewski unmasked the policy of gross trade discrimination practised by the United States—despite volumes of fulsome platitudes which have poured from American orators on free trade. At that moment the U.S.A. was refusing export licences for about 70 commodities, representing



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Poland's normal imports from the U.S.A., to the value of 10 millions—although part payment had already beeen made—and was using its influence in the International Reconstruction Bank to ensure that the latter should apply the same obstructionist policy. The discussion at the Trusteeship Committee brought out the disgusting conditions prevalent in countries where, according to Ernest Bevin and Herbert Morrison, the word "imperialism" and "exploitation" are out of date —total disfranchisement of native populations, education and health services a mere name, corporal punishment justified for "natives" but not for Europeans, etc. It also revealed that, on this issue, the attitude of British "Labour" representatives was no different from that of Tories in the past, and that the U.S.S.R. was supported in its battle for the rights of colonial peoples by the delegations of Mexico, India, Burma, Haiti, the Philippines and many other weaker countries who did not seem to have noticed that the menace of imperialist exploitation had gone.

Not the least vivid and instructive debates took place in the committee discussing a Convention on Human Rights, where the apostles of "western civilisation" stood forth in all their glory. Thus, a Soviet motion for a clause abolishing capital punishment was fiercely opposed by British and other Great Power delegates, and was rejected by 21 to 9, with 18 abstentions and 10 "absent". Another Soviet sponsored clause that it is an obligation of the State " to ensure conditions that avert the menace of death from starvation and exhaustion", was rejected by a similar "majority" and thanks to similar opposition. Yet a third Soviet clause, prohibiting slavery and the slave trade (it turned out that in at least 12 States today slavery still exists) was only carried by a narrow majority—against the enlightened votes of the Anglo-Saxon Powers and Dominions! Perhaps the biggest defeat which "Western civilisation" sustained—in spite of the eloquence of Mrs. Roosevelt herself—was by the carrying of a clause (again moved by the U.S.S.R.) providing for equality of men and women, both in marriage and in case of divorce.

When these lines were being written, the Foreign Office and the other foreign affairs departments of the Anglo-American bloc were seething with indignation at a letter sent to the four Great Powers on November 13 by Dr. Evatt, President of the Assembly, and Trygve Lie, Secretary-General of the United Nations. The letter declared: " Every day the deadlock over Berlin continues, the danger to the peace and security of all nations continues undiminished", and said that it was within the power of the leaders of the four nations to end this danger to peace. Recalling a resolution of the General Assembly on November 3, which appealed to the Great Powers to renew their efforts to compose their differences and thus hasten the final settlement of the war, the letter urged on the four Governments concerned " the desirability of immediate conversations and of taking all other necessary steps towards the solution of the Berlin question, thus opening the way to a prompt resumption of negotiations for the con-



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clusion of the remaining peace settlements for Germany, Austria and Japan".

The fury of the British Government in particular was not concealed. The letter "has caused great embarrassment and some indignation", stated Vernon Bartlett (*News-Chronicle,* November 15) because "it will certainly be interpreted as a criticism of the determination of the Western Allies not to negotiate under duress", i.e. of their determination to disorganise the economy of the Soviet zone if possible, and failing that to push ahead with war preparations against the U.S.S.R. "The three Western Powers may—and, it is said, do—feel some sense of grievance," rumbled *The Times* (with very little information as to what "the three Western Powers" felt, but full of inspiration about the feelings of Downing Street). But neither Tory, nor Liberal nor Labour spokesmen condescended to mention the real reason for their embarrassment. This was that the resolution of November 3 had been adopted *unanimously* by the General Assembly, after having been adopted equally unanimously in its Political Committee, on a motion by Mexico, on October 22: that is, the British, American and French delegations had voted for it. Why then should they feel embarrassed and indignant when the President and Secretary-General took them at their word? Because for them on this occasion, as on so many others, their pledged word was only a trifle, dust in the eyes of their peoples; because "they want, not agreement and co-operation, but talk about agreement and co-operation"; and because they never expected to be held to their pledge.

It is fitting, for that very reason, to recall the scathing remarks with which Stalin, in his statement of October 28, continued his comment on their deliberate rupture with the U.S.S.R.:

> The instigators of war, who are striving to unleash a new war, fear more than anything else agreement and co-operation with the U.S.S.R., as the policy of agreement with the U.S.S.R. undermines the positions of the warmongers and deprives the aggressive policy of these gentlemen of its objective.
>
> Precisely for this reason they disrupt agreements already reached, disavow their representatives who have reached such agreements with the U.S.S.R., transfer the question, in violation of the United Nations Charter, to the Security Council where they possess a guaranteed majority and where they can prove anything.
>
> All this is done in order to demonstrate the impossibility of co-operating with the U.S.S.R., to demonstrate the necessity of a new war and thus prepare the conditions for the unleashing of a new war. The policy of the present leaders of the United States and Britain is a policy of aggression and the unleashing of a new war.

That is the lesson of their behaviour, not only over Berlin, but ever since the Potsdam agreement of July, 1945. It stands out uncompromisingly from their behaviour at the third United Nations Assembly. If their plans are thwarted on this occasion, it will not be thanks to their desire for peace, but because their desire for war is not shared by the vast majority of working humanity.



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# THE STRIKE FRONT IN FRANCE

*Eye-witness account specially written for* LABOUR MONTHLY

## By DOMINIQUE DESANTI

"WHAT are these black hills?"

The question came from a Paris colleague whose first visit this was to the "Black Country"—the departments of Nord and Pas-de-Calais whence come two-thirds of the entire coal output of France.

"These are not hills. They are slagheaps, mounds grown up over the course of years from the throwing-out of shale during screening." He stared at the frost-laden slagheaps, at the huge motionless pulleys of the winding cables, the bare fields of sugar beet, the flat, dull landsscape, outlined as though in *gouache,* where dwell the 195,000 men thanks to whom turn the wheels of France's industry, and he said:

"There's something devilish about a mine. It'd drive me nuts to work here . . . ."

In the same car another colleague, who—by the way—represents an extremely conservative newspaper—answered him:

"When I was deported to Germany, I did work in a mine. And it *wasn't* any picnic".

The car began to move up past a continuous file of military vehicles, strung out all along the road like a belt of cartridges. Motorised machine guns, Bren gun carriers, cars laden with CRS*, brigades in steel helmets, lorryloads of armed troops, and I thought myself suddenly back in the days when I visited the front as a war correspondent. One hundred thousand men under a General are said to have been launched against the region, to "restore order". The official reports have the ring of war communiqués. Every now and then certain newspapers print accounts of the strikers having fired, or thrown hand grenades; or that they attacked first. Their following issues tend to pipe down—"it has been established that only superficial injuries were suffered by the CRS and that firearms were not employed".

I watched the "attack" on the Carvin Pit, near Lens. The strike picket comprised 150 men, nearly all deep-level miners, men accustomed to go down to work in the morning without any certainty that every one of them would come up by night. The police did not execute their attack frontally. They penetrated into the pithead buildings by a rear entrance. The order to attack was shouted suddenly; the CRS threw tear-gas bombs. Overhead, in the mist-pale sky, circled an aeroplane, directing operations by radio.

"Look, there goes the stool-pigeon," shouted the miners, pointing

**Compagnies Républicaines de Securité,* auxiliary police Security Squads under the Ministry of the Interior, i.e. Jules Moch, and recruited largely from the similar force organised by Pétain. Some of them formed the personal bodyguard of Pierre Laval.



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him out as he ran. They coughed, wept and held handkerchiefs to their noses to avoid suffocation as they hurled bolts at their assailants. Bolts and stones against tear-gas bombs, rifles and tommy-guns. The entrance gate was broken in under pressure of a tank. I was never in Spain, but I couldn't help thinking of the battle there—bare fists against modern arms. A miners' deputy beside me said: "They've forgotten their atom bomb". Another miner, clinging to the top of a pulley-wheel, shouted directions.

After three-quarters of an hour, the strike picket was forced to evacuate the pit and chased by the CRS right into the nearby mining village, which bears the ironic name of "City of Peace". The little houses, each exactly like the other, pressed tight together in uncomfortable perspective along both sides of the street, suddenly emptied themselves of their 2,000 inhabitants. Men, women, old people, filled the streets and open spaces. Eleven thirty: the children came out of school shouting "The Boches! The Boches!" A woman screamed, "It's the SS again!" A policeman, helmeted, jack-booted, armed, his rifle thrust forward, leaped towards her, pressed her up against the wall. At that moment a bolt thrown by someone hit the CRS man on the cheek; it drew blood. His face became convulsed: all the brutality in the world became concentrated in that round, red face; unable to identify his attacker, he turned back toward the woman and started beating her with his rifle butt. She bled profusely, but continued screaming: "Assassin! To the gallows with Jules Moch!" He went on beating her, she spat at him with a mouthful of blood. The police dragged her away toward the pithead, together with 25 other prisoners whom they beat continuously for no known reason.

Every day, several times a day, in one or other district of the region, these scenes repeated themselves throughout five weeks. I was not present myself at the Firminy massacre. A friend and colleague with a high reputation for objectivity described it to me:

> The CRS attacked without warning: the workers had scarcely begun defending themselves by throwing various objects when the police fired with a 2-inch gun: not a rifle, not a tommy-gun, but a 2-inch gun, fired in the very heart of France against French workers by French policemen.

Twenty-two journalists, of very diverse political affiliation, signed a declaration that the CRS fired first and without giving warning. The local prefect called them together and tried to induce them by every means, persuasion, threats, intimidation, to withdraw their testimony; they all refused. Proceedings are now being taken against each of them.

The arrests increased; the mere fact of being a well-known CGT trade unionist suffices, the police seek no other pretext. And although martial law has not been declared, the prefects and police officers behave as though there were a full "state of emergency", forbidding all meetings and demonstrations (which, by the way, did not prevent a demonstration of 4,000 persons marching in procession in the town of Denain). One miner grinned and commented to me:

> They're exactly the identical posters the Germans stuck up,



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"prohibition of assembly of more than three persons!" My wife and I can't take a family stroll any more: I've got nine children and my father and brother live with us; when we go out, that makes thirteen, more than four "assemblies" . . . and, by the way, the German occupation army wasn't quite so big as this one.

A few days previous to the issue of these orders, we had arrived at Barrois pit, near Lallaing-en-Douaisis. The pit head had just been "captured" by Bren carriers (the strike picket had comprised 31 men). The usual forces were deployed along the road. The miners lingered near their lost mine. We were chatting, when suddenly a woman came out of her home, bearing a coffee-pot, traditional symbol of "Black Country" hospitality. We gratefully swallowed the hot coffee on that freezing morning, as she said:

> What use will it be to them to knock down our pit-head walls with tanks? The CRS won't go down the mine to dig coal for them. Nor will the miners. Except for German POWs even the foreign labour here is solid with our strike, and that despite the expulsion threats of the Ministry of the Interior. As for blacklegs . . .

Those around clenched their fists. A miners' deputy said to me:

> This strike is a mass rising against the threat to our very existence. There's the wages question, there's also the guarantee of our security. Our whole livelihood is in issue; we shan't give way.

One hour later, at Lallaing, a procession formed: one thousand men and women. A stout housewife brandished a patched red flag, snatched up by her husband on the way to the surface. Suddenly a patrol with levelled rifles barred the route. The crowd pressed forward against the rifles borne by the CRS. The Mayor, a little man in spectacles with the air of a dutiful office employee, parleyed with the police captain. The officer agreed to let us pass, but before he did so he gave a signal. Motorised machine-guns, light tanks, even trucks containing a parachute detachment wearing American uniforms ("We're up against the West Bloc's army" murmured a voice by my side) filed, no doubt as an example, past the crowd still held back by the police. Suddenly rose the Marseillaise, regaining its revolutionary power: "Contre nous, de la tyrannie—L'étendard sanglant est levé—Entendez-vous dans les campagnes—Mugir ces féroces soldats. . ."

I've seen many strikes since 1936. This one has a temper of its own. It is marked with a bitter determination and a fierce spirit of resistance that raises it to the level of the greatest chapters in French working-class history. One senses that the working-class as a whole feels itself more apart from the Government, more separated, more thrown back on itself, and from this it derives a more vivid realisation of its solidarity. 45,000,000 francs have been collected for the strikers among the workers. The painter Picasso came bringing a little rectangular packet done up in newspaper. "Here's my coal-brick for the miners." Everyone thought it was a piece of his new pottery, that would need selling, and without undue thanks it was put on the desk. "Aren't you going to open the parcel?" asked Picasso, disappointedly. They opened it: inside was a million in thousand-franc notes.

I talked about the strike with the Secretary of the CGT miners'



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federation of the Pas de Calais department, Léon Delfosse, a miner down the pit for 23 years, who spent the whole period of the occupation here, illegally, so that now every urchin greets him by his name. Following nationalisation, he was appointed Assistant Director-General of Coalmines; last January he was sacked. He said:

> The Black Country has been used to strikes since 1872, when Thiers sent two divisions here. In 1906 there was a 53-day strike with fighting after the Courriere pit disaster. In 1931 there was fighting again. In 1941, with the occupation in full force, we kept up a strike for 23 days: the Germans shot 27 of us, miners' deputies headed by a Communist mayor. This strike is life or death to us and the strikers are quite capable of being rough with "deckhands" (the local word for strike-breakers); they look on them as traitors to their class.

I spoke with August Le Coeur, national secretary of the CGT miners' federation, ex-Secretary of State for Coalmines, administrative secretary of the French Communist Party. He, too, is a down-the-pit miner from Lens; he has the big frame, the direct smile and the characteristic intonation. He explained to me:

> There has been a deliberate campaign by the former mineowners (who still get 25 francs a ton on all coal extracted) and the Ministers to discredit the miners. There has been deliberate exploitation of the least productive veins (although during the occupation the most productive were exploited) in order to reduce the figures of individual output and portray the miner as a "lazy absentee", thus belittling the workers' rôle in the national economy. Despite this, however, in 1946 production rose from 86,000 to 100,000 tons a day. Now it's gone down to 75,000—there's no Communist Minister to be blamed about it. This reduction of output gives excuse to increase coal imports from America. The three Lacoste decrees now remove every safeguard enjoyed by the miners.

The right-wing papers announce that work is being resumed in the pits. We can say quite objectively that, except in the Moselle basin where the police have freed German POWs to go down, this news is false. This strike, which has now spread to the dockers, who refuse to unload coal-boats, and the railwaymen, who won't drive coal-trains, is the central event of French politics: it displays the stiffening and sharpening of French working-class solidarity.

I believe that the deployment of armed force, the casualties, the use of gas and tanks, the arrests have deepened the gulf between the working class and the Socialist Party Ministers. These measures have demonstrated that the famous "Struggle on two fronts" of the "Third Force" boils down in reality to the single struggle against the working class and the playing of de Gaulle's game.

This strike had nothing political in its inception. But it will most certainly have definite political consequences, provoked by the very repressive measures taken against it. More and more the working class (without which it is difficult to govern in France) is seeing through the lie of "maintenance of order" directed against its interest.

5.11.48.



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# GREAT AMERICAN CONFIDENCE TRICK

## By IVOR MONTAGU

> "A deputy should know that he is the servant of the people . . . and that he must follow the line laid down in the mandate given him by the people . . . My advice, the advice of a candidate to his electors, is . . . that they keep an eye on their deputies, control them, and, if they should take it into their heads to turn off the right road, get rid of them . . ." (J. V. STALIN, Election speech, 11.12.37).

THE quotation that stands at the head of this article epitomises one essential aspect of the Soviet conception of democracy, that the people can only realise their will by incessant attention, by participation in the act of government, and that to regard "democracy" as accomplished by the intermittent casting of a ballot—after which the back can be turned till next time—is to invite betrayal. Curiously enough, or perhaps not curiously, this conception is not very different from the traditional American conception, as exemplified by Abraham Lincoln's insistence on the people's right to rebellion, as the ultimate safeguard, and highest expression, of the democratic principle. It is, however, a very far cry from what has just happened in the United States. A thrill of joy went round the world at the news of the U.S. election result. This joy was not due to confidence in, or expectations from, Truman, which would certainly be misplaced. It was joy at the defeat of Dewey. His defeat confirmed faith in humanity. It showed that there are limits to the degree of naked political cynicism which the most powerful apparatus can induce human beings to swallow. Nobody wanted him. Nobody liked him. Nobody trusted him. Even *The Times* commented on the degradation of a supposedly democratic process which appeared to leave first a nominating convention and then an electorate with no choice but to take him.

Yet the whole weight of the machinery of activity (the political machine, money, employers' pressure, propaganda) together with the novel machinery of anticipation (exploiting the band-waggon tendencies in the American public, i.e., opinion polls, press and radio forecasts) proved insufficient. The creature Dewey was really too much, too obviously much. Of course, those most interested in marking the lessons to be drawn from the rout of all the forecasting mumbo-jumbo, have not unsuccessfully concentrated attention on what they describe as the "fallibility" of the forecast. But there is another side to it. A glimmer is revealed by M. R. Werner (*Herald Tribune*, 6.11.48):

> "We all went so far away in our predictions, including your correspondent, that we are beginning to question our sources of information. No one wants any government control of the press, except the Communists, but many of us are beginning to wonder whether the



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springs that flow into the river of our thought haven't been polluted by innocent wishful thinkers and guilty propagandists."

"Guilty propagandists." The Dewey forecast was proved fallible not as a proposition in mathematics is proved erroneous, but as a weapon is proved insufficient to gain victory. Perhaps there will be other Americans now, besides Werner, wondering whether, if "the springs that flow into the river of thought" can dare to be so monstrously mendacious about events near home, they may be at least wickedly misleading about political and public sentiment in other countries.

The people's heart is sound, even in America. Not Gallup was right, but Stalin. "The horrors of the recent war are too active in the minds of the people and the social forces in favour of peace are too great for Churchill's pupils in aggression to be able to overpower and deflect them towards a new war." That is why they couldn't stomach Dewey.

But why did Truman win?

The answer to this has been missed by many. It is this, *that the campaign of Wallace was decisive.* Wallace stood for peace, for the rescue of American home and foreign policy from the hands of the tycoons and generals, for the curbing of the rapacity of big business, for lowering of costs, for the defence of workers' right of free organisation, for social reforms in health and housing, for justice for Black men, Jews and even Communists. This is the policy, supported, though not in the person of Wallace or the form of a Third Party, by the American people at the polls.

The wiseacres who at one time forecast for Wallace ten million votes, and later four million, did not overestimate his following. They were guided by the response, in the form of meetings and enthusiasm, evoked by his preaching. They were not wrong.

It is true Wallace got only one million. The circumstance that he was denied the ballot in eight states—including Illinois, where (in Chicago) his followers had polled half-a-million at a by-election; that in other States, e.g. Ohio, his campaign was the victim of obstacles such as the leaving of his name off the ballot paper—these are interesting scintillations of the American scene, but they are of minor relevance. The real reason why Wallace did not, and could not, get more votes was the fact—well-known to British Communists from their own experience—that in a two-party election system without proportional representation, a vote for a Third Party appears to most people to be of merely demonstrative character. It takes a developed political consciousness and a deep political faith to appreciate that a demonstrative vote for a Third Party may be of more service to progress than a vote effective in electing what is apparently, but only apparently, the lesser of two evils. In U.S.A. as in Britain, this faith and consciousness is still rare.

Wallace convinced and Truman reaped just as the Labour Party



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leaders in 1945 profited from the ceaseless and patient work that the Left had done to popularise Socialism and expose the Tories.

The platforms adopted by the two main parties, Democratic and Republican, at their Conventions hardly differed. This is usual in American politics. These two parties do not represent groups divided by principle, like European parties. They are continental blocs of compromise, severed by each other only by rivalry for office, and deliberately adopt blank programmes, into which their orators are left free to write any interpretation that the opportunity of the occasion may indicate as profitable. But as the campaigns advanced *both* candidates became aware of the response which Wallace's criticism had evoked in the minds of the people. Truman, early, and thoroughly as time went on, set out to convince the public that he was more Wallace-like than not only the Republicans, and not only his own Party, but even than his own administration. Even Dewey began to wobble. Graceless and consumed by vanity and certitude, he thought it unnecessary to wobble much. Truman was more astute.

On Palestine, on the Minimum Wage, on Social Security, on Full Employment, on Civil Rights for minorities, Dewey followed the pace set by Truman. The former was always the more windy and vague; in his conceit and complacency he thought it unnecessary to compliment his hearers by being as specific as his rival, but he made wide general remarks that looked as if they *might* mean the same thing as Truman promised. But on other issues Truman set a pace in promises that Dewey wrongly thought it quite unnecessary to follow. On the Taft-Hartley anti-trade union law, Dewey was frankly for, Truman ostensibly against. Thus: " The Taft-Hartley law is not perfect. Whenever and wherever it needs a change it will be changed. But the welfare of both labour and the whole of our people has been advanced." (Dewey). " The Taft-Hartley law is the opening gun in the Republican onslaught against the rights of the working man. It should be repealed." (Truman).

Truman's most profitable (profitable in the popularity-hunting sense) presidential veto, was that against the Taft-Hartley. Just as it was a master stroke when he reconvened the Republican dominated Congress to show that it would refuse to re-establish price controls. (He who had been the first to lift them after the war!) Truman even used the Red issue—which he had been the first to raise and which Dewey sought to turn against him (" There will not be any Communists in the Government after January 20 "—Dewey)—to acquire demagogical merit ("The real danger to our democracy comes mainly from powerful reactionary forces which are silently undermining our democratic institutions "—Truman). Dewey made it clear he intended to lighten the burden on the rich (" We will revise taxes to provide increased incentive for production and thrift ") and make over to them, without fiction or figleaf, the atomic knowledge America's allies freely furnished to America for purpose of winning the war: "We know what the enterprise, initiative and creative powers of our people



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can do. We know this too well to leave the possibilities of the atomic age solely in the hands of a government monopoly." Truman (despite what has already in reality been done in this direction by his administration) boldly rebutted him in terms no one of us could better: "Atomic energy should not be used to fatten the profits of big business. The largest corporation is too small to be entrusted with such power."

To all this add the episodes of the Bedell-Smith offer and the Justice Vinson idea. Not the most carefully-staged masquerade could have given the American public a clearer-limned picture of Harry Truman as the simple, genuine soul seeking peace, but restrained by the rough hand of General Marshall. Dewey's attempt to exploit the incidents as evidence of Truman's "irresponsibility" played straight into Truman's hands. It helped the public to believe that these abortive gesticulations were earnestly intended as an index of Harry's "real" desires, to kill before birth the suspicion that they might be merely on a subtle electioneering trick.

These final conjectural "aspirations" of Truman decided the destination of the missing Wallace votes, and with them, the election. Just as the moguls of the CIO and AFL had decided that a President Truman would give them a better chance of securing revocation of Taft-Hartley than could a demonstrative vote for Wallace, the millions made uneasy and ashamed by the bombast of Clay and Marshall were won by the ingenious Vinson manœuvre, which made re-election of Truman seem a "practical" advantage. But what will it mean in practice? Is the defeat of Dewey a victory for progress, or, at least, anything more than an emotional one?

Speculation on this point rages round the character of Truman. But this is really irrelevant. Is Harry really an honest, bewildered little man, doing his best but Marshall-battered? Or is he a shrewd and subtle politician who had the wit early to see that, assailed from right and left, by enraging the Thurmond Dixiecrats he jeopardised only 30 odd electoral votes, by wooing the voters roused by Wallace's evangel he stood to win every state outside the South? What does the answer matter—to anyone, except possibly the immigration officer at the Pearly Gates?

It may well be that the Truman elected by popular vote will be a more self-confident President than the Truman who succeeded to the White House by accident. But to assume that only self-confidence is necessary to reorientate U.S. policy is to misconceive entirely the nature of the state under capitalism. Stalin (in his interview with H. G. Wells 1934), after commending the "initiative, courage, determination" of Franklin D. Roosevelt, as undoubtedly "one of the strongest figures among all the captains of the contemporary capitalist world", warned that "as soon as Roosevelt, or any other captain in the contemporary bourgeois world, proceeds to undertake something serious against the foundation of capitalism, he will inevitably suffer



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utter defeat." And whatever Truman is, however many of these qualities he displays, he is no Roosevelt.

How could Truman reverse the policy of his administration to date? To give Negroes equal rights in fact, would mean final break with the Democratic Party machine in the Southern States, would mean rousing a popular movement against the whole lynch-police apparatus that makes voting there a mockery and arrested a Vice-Presidential candidate for choosing the entrance door at his own meeting. To end the Red-baiting, cancel the legal fiction of the prosecution of the twelve Communist leaders and vote down the Thomas Un-American Activities Committee would require the purging of his whole secret police apparatus from top to bottom and a readiness to withstand and crush the unbounded Hearst-Pattison denigration of which he would instantly be the object. To raise the real value of wages and limit profits would mean facing (and crushing) unlimited sabotage from the big business direction on whom not only his party but the current economy of America depends. To adopt an external policy of peace would mean to sack Marshall, MacArthur, Clay, Forrestal and Royall—and to outface the yapping of Bevin, Chiang, Blum, de Gaulle, Tsaldaris and the countless jackal horde suddenly left prospectless by withdrawal of their bounty. Does anyone see Truman leading *that* fight?

So, perish illusion. We return to the election speech of Stalin with which we began. What will determine U.S. foreign democratic policy during the next five years is not the nature of the promises that Truman, ingeniously or ingenuously, made while seeking re-election. It is the active interest in their performance shown by the American people. There are certain parallels between the British election of 1945 and the U.S. election of last month. In each case the leader of war-mongering and reaction, whose victory (if for distinct reasons) was thought inevitable, was defeated. In each case the people voted for a progressive policy that had been popularised by the Left. And in the one case, as in the other, that policy will remain paper, the actual policy pursued will remain, under one pretext or another, the "bipartisan" policy of the Right rejected by the people, if they stand back trustfully and watch. The Wallace movement has still a crucial part to play. Will the American people remain inactive, will they permit their electoral system to get away with its characteristic confidence trick? Tycoons and Truman alike must be asking themselves this question rather fearfully today. You can't fool all the people, all the time, humanity learns from its mistakes. And the people who turned down Dewey with all his tactical advantages of last November and forced Truman to borrow so many of the plumes of the man he had thrown overboard, are not quite in the beginners' class as learners. Harry Truman, thinking out a policy now, must feel rather like a keeper who has to enter a lion's cage every day and wonders how long the press and radio will keep the lion from noticing that he's being fobbed off with straw when he roars for meat. Even if he strengthens the iron bars, the job won't be easy forever.



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# WHERE WAGES RISE AND PRICES FALL

By JAMES KLUGMANN

EACH month demonstrates to the people of Western Europe the effects of American "generosity". Whilst right wing Labour and Trade Union leaders laud to the skies this act of "unexampled Christian solidarity", the Marshall Plan brings in its wake speed-up, wage cuts and unemployment. The more Marshall the less wages. Yet how completely and utterly different is the picture in those lands where the Governments rejected the Marshall Plan!

It was the Soviet Union and the new democracies of Eastern Europe that knew the full horror and destruction of Fascist invasion and occupation. It was in these countries that devastation was greatest, and greatest the loss in human life. Yet it is in these countries, where the working people rule and where the Marshall Plan has been rejected, that from the waste and destruction of the war is arising a new life, new prosperity, new cultural possibilities for the working people.

Let facts and figures talk!

When the war was over Stalin pointed to the new tasks that faced the Soviet people:—

> Having terminated the war with victory over the enemies, the Soviet Union has entered a new peaceful period in its economic development . . . In the shortest possible time we must heal the wounds inflicted on our country by the enemy and restore the pre-war level of development of the national economy in order considerably to surpass this level in the nearest future, *to raise the material* well-being of the people . . .

Already, today, the first two years of the Five Year Plan have been successfully fulfilled. Standing in the third decisive year, the Soviet people can feel confident that the whole plan will be achieved well ahead of schedule. In the first nine months of 1948, gross output of Soviet industry showed a 27 per cent. increase over the corresponding period of 1947 whilst industrial output was proceeding at 17 per cent. above that of 1940. This year, for example, the collective farms will receive three times more tractors, twice as many motor lorries, twice as much agricultural machinery as in the last year before the war.

Increased production in the land of socialism, unlike the Marshall "sphere of influence", means rising living standards. In December, 1947, the Soviet Government adopted the historic decision to carry through the currency reform, abolish the rationing system and reduce prices in state trading. Reduction of state retail prices of foodstuffs and manufactured goods led to reduction of prices in the co-operative and in the collective farm markets. In the first quarter of 1948, already, sale of bread was 72 per cent. above that of the first quarter of the previous year, sale of sugar had risen 2.7 times, biscuits and confectionery 57 per cent. *In this quarter, already, the purchasing*



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*power of the rouble rose by 41 per cent. and the real wages of the workers by 51 per cent. over those of the previous year.* Less than four months after the ending of rationing, the Soviet Government, in April, 1948, announced a new series of price cuts. Prices of clocks, watches, wireless sets, perfumes, wine, vodka, beer, etc., fell 10-20 per cent. Meanwhile with the enthusiasm of socialist competition, production grew apace. By November, 1948, three years after the end of the war, the purchasing power of the rouble had doubled *and the real wages of the workers were more than twice those of the previous year.*

In France, it should be added, "Western democratic" France, France of the Marshall Plan, between August, 1946—October, 1948, the living standards of the workers *fell* from 79% to 51% of pre-war level.

Moreover the availability of so vast an array of social services, educational and cultural facilities, unknown to the workers of the capitalist world, means that living standards have risen in the Soviet Union for more than is shown by mere wages figures.

Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, in the new democracies, where power has passed into the hands of the working people led by the working class, where the key industries have been nationalised and the great landed estates divided, where the people are fighting forward to socialism, despite all the devastation of the war, the life of the working people is growing easier, living standards moving upwards.

President Boleslaw Bierut, speaking in the Polish Parliament on October 28 of this year, revealed that 1948 production would be 25-30 per cent. of that of 1947, whilst, on a per capita basis, 1947 production had already surpassed that of before the war. In 1948 nearly twice as much coal, coke and power and 35% more steel were produced as in 1938, whilst pre-war production of bread and grain was exceeded. During this year food consumption and real wages passed that of before the war. By the end of the year the Three Year Plan will be more than two-thirds fulfilled, and is now sure to be completed ahead of schedule. But in the footsteps of the Soviet Union, the new democratic states are establishing wide schemes of social service that entirely change the workers' lives. In the new Poland of 1948, the cost of social and health insurance is borne entirely by the employers. All fees for doctors' services and medicines have been abolished. Sickness benefits are now 70 per cent. of full wages with an additional 5 per cent. for each child. Confinement benefits for working women were recently increased from 75% to 100% of normal wages with three months' confinement leave. The nationalised industry pays a sum equivalent to 7% of the total wages bill for social welfare, which is spent by the Trade Unions on rest homes, canteens, sports and cultural materials. Recent laws guarantee holidays with pay on the scale of 8 days for those who have worked for one year, 15 days for those who have worked over three years, and one month for those who have worked for ten years or more. Free transport is given to workers on vacation, and those who go to the Trade Union



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holiday centres contribute only 30% of the cost of board and lodging. 400,000 workers took advantage of this new scheme this year.

Antal Apro, Secretary-General of the Hungarian T.U.C., was able to report to the Trade Union Congress at the end of October this year that:

> The stabilization of our economic life, the execution of the Three-Year Plan and, last but not least, the considerable success achieved by increasing production are shown in the improvement of the living standards of the working people. The standard of living has been increased in two ways: by the rise of wages and by the reduction of prices of food and other consumer goods.

The average Hungarian hourly wage in the manufacturing industries has risen by 138% between October, 1946, and August, 1948. Meanwhile prices have been steadily falling. During this period there was a sharp reduction in the price of bread, sugar, potatoes and of clothing. Electricity costs fell 20 per cent. and gas 5 per cent. Taking into account the fall of prices and the rise of wages, *real wages almost doubled* (196%) between August, 1946, and August, 1948.

In different degrees but always in the same direction, similar developments are taking place in the other East European democracies. In Czechoslovakia, by the end of 1948 industrial production per capita will have increased over 20% compared with pre-war. Consumption of meat, bread and other food-stuffs has already surpassed pre-war consumption per head. By November, 1948, real wages are considerably above pre-war wages as prices have risen 3 times whilst wages have risen 4½ times.

In Bulgaria, industrial production in the first six months of 1948 rose 36 per cent. compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. Consumption per head of foodstuffs rose sharply. During the year meat prices fell 2.5%, bread 5%, potatoes, 7%, shoes and leather soles 6%.

In Rumania, important Government measures to reduce prices were taken in August of this year. Restaurant prices, for instance, were cut 30 per cent. At the end of September the Council of Ministers communicated:

> The increased efforts of the working class and all employees following the nationalisation of industry, transport and banking, have led to a reduction of production costs, running expenses and special expenditure, and labour productivity has risen . . . This has made for important increases in production and allowed considerable tax reduction. *In this way the necessary conditions for a new price reduction have been created, which will lead to a better life for those who work.*

The Rumanian people, therefore, today await with confidence new measures for price reduction.

Now the peoples of the new democracies are passing into the stage of long-term planning. Today it is not only a question of counting present gains, but the working people can look forward with confidence to the future. Strong in their friendship and co-operation with the Soviet Union, they can move forward towards socialism, overcoming all resistance. The nightmare of capitalism—crisis, redun-



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dancy, speed-up, nationalisation which is still the nightmare of the workers in the " Marshall world "—is for them over.

The Polish Six Year Plan will begin in January, 1950. The completion of the Three Year Plan, declared President Bierut, " will constitute a starting point for laying the foundation of socialism in Poland, for her becoming one of the leading countries in Europe . . . The Six Year Plan will set us the tremendous task of completely liquidating poverty in Poland". By the end of the Six-Year Plan (1956), industrial output will be *double that of* 1949 *and the living standards of the people will be twice as high.*

The Bulgarian Five Year Plan (1949-1953), declared Traicho Kostov, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, on September 8, 1948, "will give a great impetus to the improvement of the material and cultural standards of the working people".

Speaking of the Czechoslovak Five-Year Plan (1949-1953), the Prime Minister, Mr. Zapotocky, declared on October 8, 1948, that " the content of the law on the Five-Year Plan is the building up and the transformation of Czechoslovak economy. Its task is to improve the living standards of all sectors of the working population". National income will be increased by 48 per cent., industrial production by 57 per cent., whilst the consumption of the people will increase 40 per cent. in the course of the five years of the Plan.

The Hungarian Five Year Plan (1950-1955) will see, according to first estimates, increased industrial production of 50 per cent. over that of 1948. Agricultural production will rise 35 per cent. and the living standards of the people will again rise steeply. The 10-year Plan of Electrification and the 10-year Irrigation Plan will lead to increased well-being of the people.

So whilst the peoples of the " Marshall World " move into slump and crisis, whilst prices rise and wages fall, and more production leads to more profits, in the Soviet Union the people led by the C.P.S.U.(B) move forward confidently from the ravages of war to reconstruction, from socialism to communism—towards abundance. In the new democracies, the people led by their united working class parties in close friendship with the Soviet Union fight their way forward towards socialism, winning a new life of plenty and of culture.

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# THE "MARSHALL" STANDARD OF LIFE

## By MARGARET HUDSON

*"If the rank and file Britisher can see his living standard go down and down without losing courage, and if the British manufacturers can show greater willingness to modernise their machines and methods, the prospects for the future of Britain are not too dark."*

(Report of Kunkel Committee to Congress on Aid for Britain: 7th March, 1948).

ANYONE who opposes the Marshall Plan in the Labour movement, anyone who criticises wage-freezing, is today accused by the Right Wing of trying to wreck economic recovery—of working, as the T.U.C. General Council puts it, " to intensify social misery and to create conditions of chaos and economic instability". Yet the striking fact is that in all the countries receiving Marshall "aid" there is growing evidence of economic instability and "social misery".

The stage of economic crisis reached varies greatly from one country to another—some gasping in agony, some as yet showing only milder symptoms. But in all a common pattern can be traced—the capitalists, under increasing pressure, trying to re-establish or maintain their strength by growing attacks on the standards of the working class. British capitalism as a very big imperialist power has so far had more room to manœuvre: but the same forces are at work here, too.

> It is a phenomenon covering the whole Western world that the total demands on resources have exceeded supply and . . . inflation has resulted everywhere . . . The stubborn fact remains that, unless inflation is brought under control quickly, subsequent drastic deflation threatens not only E.R.P. countries but the whole Western world.
>
> Concealed inflation in Britain is considered still a major problem (by American officials on E.C.A. and World Bank) to which the British Government should give much closer attention, despite recognised political difficulties.
>
> (*Financial Times Washington* correspondent, November 15th).

In many European countries the attack on the workers' conditions has gone a long way; and millions of trade unionists have joined in strikes of resistance, which the "Marshall" governments meet with tear-gas bombs and machine guns. Thus in *France,* in the year to August, 1948, food prices rose by over 50%. Production all-over is 15% above pre-war, but the black market flourishes as never before, and workers' standards have been halved. Profits in France had risen from 29% of national income in 1938 to 42.5% in 1948; wages had fallen from 45% to 38%. The miners on strike in Northern France had been getting a minimum wage of less than 10/- a day (475.3 fr. for an underground labourer). But the British trade unions are told that such strikes aim " to frame industrial demands for purposes of political agitation—to magnify industrial grievances."



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In *Belgium*, from March, 1947, to October, 1948, prices rose by 25%; profits doubled; money wages remained almost unchanged.

In *Western Germany*, where currency reform was billed to end inflation, high prices have become so intolerable that on November 14, ten million (*The Times* estimate) joined in a one-day protest stoppage organised by the unions.

In Britain, there has not been the runaway price rise that has occurred in France and Italy; but according to the new official index, British retail prices are now 8% above June, 1947, which makes them about 83% above the pre-war level. Wage rates for a normal working week, in manufacturing industry, are only 66-67% above pre-war and "stabilised" at that figure. This means that after eight years of full employment, the workers are barely maintaining their average standards of working on bonus and two or three hours' overtime; and the least slackening in trade will leave them well below pre-war standards.

The trend of the years since the war in Britain, too, is higher prices and indirect taxes, lower real wages and higher profits. This has been more evident in the last year. From October, 1947, to April, 1948, prices (including indirect taxes) rose 8%, men's pay packets only 4%. Production has increased—in June, 1948, it was 24% above the 1946 level—but the benefits have gone to profits. Real wages have fallen. Recent figures in the *Economist* (week to November 13th) show that consolidated profits are still running at almost 50% above the 1947 rate—so much for "stabilisation". Just as in France, just as in Belgium, the distribution of the product is changing—a bigger share to surplus value and military expenditure, a smaller share to wages. Production, however, is no longer expanding as it was from 1946 to 1948. The barrier is the capitalist framework—the anarchy, and even more the lack of purchasing power in the workers' pockets at home, and the growth of capitalist competition abroad.

For example, the capitalists in the clothing and drapery trades are pressing strongly for the rationing system to be ended altogether, so that the wealthier consumer can buy freely the stocks that have piled up in the shops because the workers cannot afford them and foreign buyers do not want them.

> The decline in (drapery) sales in face of the huge accumulation of unexpended coupons held by the public, mounting stocks of a wide range of merchandise, and the absence of a rush for the recently derationed articles all substantiate the theory that purchasing power is now the sole regulator of consumer demand, and this factor becomes more effective as prices continue to increase.
>
> (*Times* Review of Industry, November, 1948).

The Government's policy, however, is the systematic "deflation" of *both* workers' purchasing power *and* supplies of consumer goods. For example, less clothing is to be released for the home market in 1948 than in 1947.

Cripps' forecast for the future development of Britain's economy (Cmd. 7545), punctually submitted to the O.E.E.C. in October, shows



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that the Government is not allowing in the next four years for any rise in the consumption of the people above the present monotonous standard. What is more, the production and export levels forecast here for 1948-9 give a new and sinister slant on the productivity drive for which the General Council is now whipping up the unions. Exports, by the end of 1949, are expected to be about 3% above the end-1948 level; production, now 25% above 1938, may be 25-30% above at the end of 1949. That is, neither production nor exports are expected to go on increasing much, if at all, in the next year. The drive is now to *cut costs*—so that the level of exports can be maintained—rather than to increase production all round. And this must mean either lower wages per worker or fewer workers employed.

The symbol of the productivity drive in the Government advertisements is no longer the power-loader or the automatic loom. It is the wise old cobbler who, using both hands for his work, has discovered that he can speed the job up by keeping thirty tacks in his mouth and moving them forward to the "ready" with his tongue. Time-study men and shop stewards, go and do likewise!

There is, of course, good reason for this. There is not enough steel, for one thing. American policy demands that Britain uses steel for rearming, not for the modernisation of industry. For American steel, pig iron or scrap is far too precious to give away to a rival Britain as Marshall aid. And some British employers may well prefer speed-up, rate-cutting and intensification of work to investing more capital.

The pattern is clearest, perhaps, in the Lancashire cotton industry—one of the most backward in Britain. Here there has been a great deal of talk about re-equipment, and the Government offered a subsidy to firms that will re-equip and reorganise. But the response has been small; hard-headed old mill-owners have no intention of putting good money into new plant when there may be a crash coming.

The employers' aim is to get the increased output needed for the time being by systematic overtime, and by rearranging and intensifying the work on the old machines (" redeployment "). But Lancashire people have enough experience to know that this is no basis for a prosperous future in world markets, and there is consternation at the announcement that Britain and four other sterling area countries are to buy £16mn. worth of textiles from Japan in 1948-49. Mr. Ernest Thornton, Secretary of the United Textile Factory Workers' Association, commented:

> Unless control is exercised over the development of the Japanese textile industry there is a grave danger that standards of wages and conditions built up over a number of years in the textile industries of Britain and elsewhere will be destroyed. In many quarters fears are now being expressed that the policy now being adopted by the American occupation authorities in Japan is mainly political and bears little relation to economic consideration of other Allied nations.
>
> (*Financial Times*, 10.11.48).

In mining, too, the modernisation of the pits is in practice being



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put off. Manpower is far short of the Government's own estimate in February of what is needed. But there are to be no more "over-generous" concessions to encourage youngsters to come in. "The honeymoon is over," says the Coal Board; in future the industry must "pay"—pay the £15,000,000 interest charges too—but without a subsidy. The Americans press for lower export prices for British coal to bring it into line with the prices of Bizonia, based on far lower wages and conditions. And so the Government prepares to drive the miners harder. Longer stints and voluntary overtime are not enough. All kinds of new compulsions are proposed. Miners are now invited through their union to assist in fining themselves for absenteeism if they lose a shift. Miners' delegates in the main coalfields have rejected this absenteeism plan. They have given this policy a useful check; to reverse it will be as big a struggle as they have ever engaged in.

The drive to "cut costs" is already leading to dismissals, in British industry as in other "Marshall" countries. The *Economist* (6.11.48) reports on the progress in this line elsewhere:

> Italian employers are now making serious efforts to reduce their staffs to reasonable proportions for the work in hand . . . It is essential if Italian production costs are to be reduced. The feeling is growing among employers that they are now in a stronger position to try their hand than a few weeks ago.

These Italian "redundancies" have already led to go-slows and strikes at the Fiat motor works and at Snia Viscosa rayon works. A similar drive is reported from France, from Holland. British Overseas Airways Corporation combines a new bonus system with plans to sack 900 workers; 1,500 go on strike. With 3-4,000 dockers already idle in the Port of London for lack of work, introduction of a new machine which would mean more unemployment causes a stoppage. On the nationalised railways and transport system, economy plans to meet the compensation burden are turning out to mean economies in staff and extra work for the rest. The British film industry, like the French, is producing fewer pictures and laying off workers.

Shipbuilding, too, is beginning to show the effects of the cut of 15 per cent. or thereabouts in steel allocations, and the growth of overseas competition. The State Department's demand, made in December, 1947, for a reduction in British shipbuilding, is being met in practice. In the third quarter of 1948, tonnage in hand fell by 34,000 and fewer new ships are being laid down. Export targets for 1949, issued in October, showed some heavy cuts in earlier wishful-thinking estimates, which may have a sharp effect on the workers in several important industries. Woollen textiles, hosiery, clothing, tobacco, boots and shoes, leather trades, paper and rubber industries are expected to export less in 1949 than in 1948. And it is not likely that they will be allowed to keep up their raw material imports, merely so as to maintain production and supply the home market. In shipbuilding, boots



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